

Responses to caBIG® Support Service Provider Program Questions

1. *Does NCI plan to forward requests for help and questions from the caBIG® community to the approved service providers? In other words, will the NCI help identify "leads" for the service providers?*

The caBIG® program will direct requests for help to the Support Service Provider page on the caBIG® community website, which will have links to licensed Support Service Providers according to Service Category.

2. *Will approved service providers receive any priority for compliance evaluation?*

No, approved Support Service Providers will not receive any priority for compliance or compatibility evaluation.

3. *Proposal delivery instructions on top of page two are not clear. Can proposals be delivered either email or hardcopy or is the government expecting both? Can you please clarify how will email submittals be stamped? Via the time sent or received in the recipient's mail box?*

Proposals may be delivered either electronically to caBIG_SSP@mail.nih.gov or in hardcopy. Electronic submission is preferred. Email submissions will be time-stamped with the time sent.

4. *Regarding Evaluation Criteria for Adaptation and Enhancement of caBIG®-Compatible Software Applications: Staffing and scalability section c, the government has indicated they are looking for submission of representative staff resumes. With the page constraints indicated on page 5, is the government expecting resumes to be included in the page constraint, attached to proposals or was this a possible oversight in the text. Please advise.*

Representative resumes should be attached to the proposal and will not be included in the page count with respect to the limit constraints.

5. *Will this be the only opportunity to apply to participate in the caBIG® Support Service Provider Program, or will this process be repeated again in the future? Would future applications be based on the calendar (i.e., annually) or based on needs for additional Service Providers?*

There are likely to be future opportunities to participate in the caBIG® Support Service Provider program. Future opportunities for application will be based upon the needs of the program.

6. *Will licensed Service Providers gain any benefit other than use of the caBIG® license in one or more Service Categories? For example, it has been suggested that NCI provide a forum (via web or conference) for Service Providers to connect with organizations that need services. Furthermore, will Service Providers be listed by NCI on websites or other publications? Will they be noted separately from other vendors at the caBIG® Annual Meeting or other NCI sponsored events?*

As described in Question 1 above, there is a Support Service Provider web page on the caBIG® community web site and caBIG® participants seeking Support Service will be directed there. Licensed Support Service Providers will also have special designations at caBIG® meetings, to include the caBIG® Annual Meeting. There is a dedicated SSP forum in which potential customers may post their needs and interest in SSP services and engage in a dialogue with the SSPs. This forum is accessible via the caBIG® Support Service Providers main page (https://cabig.nci.nih.gov/esn/service_providers).

7. *If an organization does not respond to this RFA in one or more Service Categories, will there be an opportunity in the future to apply? If so, will this correspond with the yearly renewal? Will NCI be reissuing this RFA on a regular basis? If so, will NCI be publishing the dates?*

See the answer to Question 5 above.

8. *The RFA claims that NCI will be managing the Service Provider program. Does this entail any activities beyond reviewing applications to the RFA and renewal applications? Will the Service Providers be responsible for any other activities?*

In managing the caBIG[®] Support Service Provider program, NCI will review initial applications, provide access to caBIG[®] Service Support Providers through the caBIG[®] community website and review performance for continued use of the caBIG[®] trademark. . Renewal criteria will be based on demonstrated adherence to the terms and conditions of the license and continued maintenance of high quality services, assessed in part through feedback from customers of caBIG[®] Support Service Providers.

9. *The RFA states that NCI may limit the number of Service Providers. Can NCI provide a ballpark estimate of the number of Service Providers it thinks that it can effectively steward? Is the expectation that the application will be highly competitive?*

The total number of Support Service Provider licenses that will be awarded is dependent on the coverage of Service Categories and other factors though, as stated in the announcement, there are no pre-set limits on the numbers of providers for each category. The strength of each organization's application will be considered against the evaluation criteria.

10. *Are applicants that are applying for more than one Service Category expected to submit separate documents for each Service Category, one document with a single background section and multiple 7 page maximum response sections (one per category), or some other formula that includes 3 pages for extra categories?*

As stated in the announcement, organizations that wish to apply for more than one Service Category should submit separate applications for each Service Category and each document must be no longer than the stated page limits.

11. *The RFA indicates that applicants should submit a proposal for evaluating customer satisfaction. Is this to be included in the 7 page response or as an attachment? What level of detail would NCI like to see in this proposal?*

Proposals for evaluating customer satisfaction should be included within the 7 page response. The level of detail requested is that which will be sufficient to judge the coverage, resources, frequency, and adequacy of the evaluation proposed.

12. *The RFA indicates that applications should submit a template service contract. Is this included in the 7 page response or as an attachment? What level of detail is NCI looking for? Is there a model service contract that NCI can provide or any other guidance NCI can give on drafting this document?*

The template service contract should be attached to the proposal and will not be included in the page count with respect to the limit constraints. The level of detail requested is that which your organization would normally expect to include in an executed service contract and should include the specific components listed under each Service Category in the announcement, which are different for each category.

13. *The RFA indicates that applications should submit a staffing plan. Is this included in the 7 page response or as an attachment? What level of detail is NCI looking for?*

The staffing plan should be included within the 7 page response limit. The staffing plan should address the organization's ability to apply the appropriate number of staff with the necessary skills and experience as well as address the scalability necessary for the long-term success of the program.

14. *In the section "Evaluation Criteria for Adaptation and Enhancement of caBIG®-Compatible Software Applications", applicants are required to submit a set of representative resumes for staff with experience in the various components of the caBIG® technology stack. Should these be included as an attachment or as part of the 7 page proposal?*

See the answer to Question 4 above.

15. *We have heard in the VCDE WS that many of the review activities of the workspace will be taken over by the SSP. However, the Solicitation issued on April 25, 2008 does not appear to mention these. What is, or will be, the inclusion of VCDE review activities in the scope of the SSP Program?*

VCDE Review activities are not within the scope of the Support Service Provider program.

16. *What will be the process for candidate service providers to apply for certification?*

Licensed Support Service Providers will follow the same process as entities applying for compatibility certification as in Question 2 above.

17. *What will be the evaluation process for applicants interested in providing those activities to the caBIG® community?*

VCDE review activities are outside the scope of this announcement.

18. *Under categories with Geographic Coverage as an evaluation criteria, will there be opportunities for organizations to be designated as Service Providers for regions - i.e. an East Coast or Mid-Atlantic Support Provider?*

Applicants that cannot provide support to the entire geographic US should list the regions which they are able to support. At this time organizations will not be designated as the Service Providers for specified regions.

19. *Would support include other NCI or caBIG® applications and/or technologies besides those listed in the bundles?*

Applicants should list the caBIG® applications and/or technologies that they are able to support. It is not expected that every successful applicant will be able to support all caBIG®-compatible applications and/or technologies. The scope is not limited to tools within the bundles.

20. *Do the 3 pages of background material need to be the same across an applicant's separate applications for each category?*

The background materials section is not required to be the same for each separate Service Category application.

21. *For the deployment support category, is offering hosting/ASP right away a requirement for certification? This would substantially increase the initial investment required (vs only providing local deployment services) to get certified with uncertain return, especially if it needs to be 21 CFR 11/GxP compliant. If it is, is there any data available on how many cancer centers might want to use this option?*

The specific evaluation criterion is to “demonstrate ability to provide IT systems as an application service provider (ASP).” It is not expected that a Support Service Provider in this Service Category will offer ASP service before market demands support such an offering.

22. For Staffing and Scalability, is there a target minimum size below which NCI anticipates that applicants would be effectively disqualified from consideration?

There is no minimum size for staffing, but staffing should be sufficient to meet the support criteria described in the Service Category applied for. A scalability plan should also be proposed.

23. How many Support Service Providers does NCI anticipate selecting? Is there a goal or a target number of providers?

See the answer to Question 9 above.

24. Can a respondent specify a limited set of the caBIG[®] domain (e.g. clinical trials) for which they propose to offer support within a particular service category? Similarly, can they restrict their application to a limited set of applications within the domain? Or are they required to provide support across all caBIG[®] applications and domain workspaces?

Respondents may specify a limited set for which they propose support. See also the answer to Question 19 above.

25. For communicating with caBIG[®] workspace officers, are official service providers allowed to post information on caBIG[®] website?

Service Providers may not post information on the caBIG[®] community website. Points of contact for relevant workspaces and activities are currently provided on the caBIG[®] community website and successful applicants will be encouraged to participate in workspace activities.

26. What does technical mentoring mean as a form of training service?

Technical mentoring refers to providing guidance and support to customers developing technologies and methods in compliance with caBIG[®] standards and practices so as to meet requirements for compatibility and/or certification.

27. Please define the meaning of "representative resumes" Do these refer to a specific person?

“Representative resumes” refer to resumes submitted to demonstrate the skills and experience of staff on board that is comparable to (and preferably may even be a part of) the staff that your organization will use to fill specific roles.

28. Amongst the list of evaluation criteria if a specific requirement is not meant by the applicant, does it mean that the application is disqualified?

As described in the announcement, applicants will be evaluated against the stated criteria and will then be ranked against other applicants in the service categories to determine the field of initially qualified applicants. Applicants will not be disqualified on the basis of a single criterion.

29. Are there any sample reports for the template service contract?

No sample reports are available for the template service contract. See also the answer to Question 12 above.

30. We are interested in becoming a service provider by responding to the Adaptation and Enhancement of caBIG® Compatible software applications part of this RFP. Do we need to demonstrate knowledge of all the applications in the LSD bundle and the CCTS bundles?

See the answer to Question 19 above.

31. Is previous participation in caBIG® a pre-requisite to participate in the support service provider program? If not, what equivalent experience will be accepted?

Previous participation in caBIG® is not a prerequisite. However, experience with the caBIG® technology stack is necessary.

32. Please provide information on the evaluation criteria to be used to assess applicants.

The evaluation criteria varies by Service Category and is as described for each category in the Call for Applications.

33. Please describe how this effort relates to the Open Development Initiative (ODI), particularly Service Category 2.

caBIG® is based on the principles of open development. Service Providers responding to Service Category 2 would be supporting the development and/or enhancement of tools created under these principles.

34. Will components, tools and applications developed for caBIG® require validation to GAMP4 procedures? Do some of the caBIG® participants require GAMP4?

Components, tools and applications developed for caBIG® do not currently require validation to GAMP4 procedures. Service Support customers may require GAMP4 at their preference.

35. Please provide information on the anticipated deployment schedule for caBIG®? Is data approximating the number of organizations/users to use caBIG® over the next 1-3 years?

Currently, the caBIG® community includes more than 1000 participants from more than 90 institutions, representing government, academia and industry. Of these over 50 centers have deployed caBIG® tools.

36. Is it envisioned that the commercial pharmaceutical domain will use the caBIG® tools?

caBIG® tools, standards and infrastructure are open to the entire biomedical community.

37. Over what period should the staffing and training plans be provided?

Applicants should describe the staffing that will be available at time of award and the training that will be implemented to achieve full staffing capability.

38. Please provide information on the anticipated scaling of caBIG® for this period so a staffing plan can be defined. Is there a high-level implementation plan or anticipated schedule for the rollout of caBIG® tools?

caBIG® tools are currently being used or deployed at a number of organizations. The scalability plan proposed by applicants should address their ability to determine the size of service support request increases and adjust staffing levels appropriately.

39. What is the minimum number of staff anticipated at the start of the project?

See the answer to Question 22 above.

40. *Will each licensed service provider establish and use their own customized customer satisfaction assessment approach or will NCI establish procedures to be used to survey and compare all licensed providers?*

Applicants should include proposals for assessing customer satisfaction. These proposals may be discussed during license negotiations.

41. *Can the customer satisfaction approach be provided as an appendix to the application and, therefore, outside of the 7-page response limit?*

The customer satisfaction approach should be described within the 7-page response limit.

42. *Can the description of a template service contract be provided as an appendix and outside of the 7-page response limit?*

See the answer to Question 12 above.

43. *We view the coordination of activities and information across Service Categories 2 and 3 to be critical to the overall success of the caBIG[®] components, tools and applications. Please describe the relationship between Category 2 (Tools development) and Category 3 (Tools deployment), specifically who is responsible and how will these efforts will be managed and coordinated. For example, the development of a new Tool/Application (Category 2) will require an understanding of the user environment and consideration of integration issues (Category 3).*

Negotiations are between Service providers and their customers. Service providers are welcome to participate in relevant caBIG[®] Workspaces to learn more about community needs and the program's strategic direction and development plans.

44. *Service Category 3 seems to include two distinct parts: (a) hardware, infrastructure, hosting and installation support and (b) additional data processing/migration and software integration activities. The skills and resources for each of these activities are vastly different. Is it possible for applicants to apply for one of these distinct parts and not the other? If not, can this service category be separated into subcategories to allow for application of one distinct part?*

Applicants should describe the services that they are able to provide in any Service Category.

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Applicants should describe the services that they are able to provide in any Service Category.

46. *If a proposal is submitted as a team (more than one company), will all of the companies on the team be granted the right to label themselves as "Licensed caBIG[®] Support Service Providers" and have the right to use that label in marketing and other communications in connection with the caBIG[®] program?*

If the team as a whole is a formal entity, for example, a partnership or corporation established under state law, that is deemed by NCI CBIIT as meeting the evaluation criteria, then the entity may be qualified to negotiate for a license with NCI and the rights of the team members would be specified in the license. However, if the team as a whole is not a legal entity, then each "member" of the teaming arrangement

which is itself a legal entity may qualify to negotiate a license to use the caBIG® trademark only if each member's component of the application is evaluated as fully meeting the service evaluation criteria on its own. In other words, a less than fully qualified team partner cannot become qualified only by benefiting from the qualifications of a qualified partner(s). Each partner must be fully evaluated for the service area proposed and meet the criteria. If a partner or team member is evaluated as complying with the service evaluation criteria, then the entity will be qualified to apply for a license for a field of use that is appropriate to its participation in the teaming or partnership arrangement.

47. Will NCI entertain applications that consist of more than one organization in partnership? If so, what are the stipulations around such a partnership? Should one organization be identified as the lead organization for licensing purposes? Should partner organizations provide a letter of support or some other documentation? Will the combined credentials of all partnered entities in the proposal be considered?

Applicants may include teams comprised of multiple organizations. Each team will be evaluated as a distinct unit; the team should document in writing that its members are contractually obligated to provide such support. The form of relationship between members, e.g., partners or contractor/subcontractor(s), is discretionary with the team. Regardless of the organizational approach, the team as a whole shall be fully accountable to its customer(s) with accountability built into the contractual (or partnership) relationship and reflected in the service level agreement template to ensure that constituent members of the team individually and collectively delivers the services promised.

If the team is a distinct legal entity, then it may negotiate for a license for use by the team as a whole. However, each team member desiring to hold itself out separately and advertise itself as a "Licensed caBIG® Support Service Provider" will need to be individually licensed by NCI for a field of use that is appropriate to its participation in the teaming or partnership arrangement. The team leader of a "Licensed caBIG® Support Service Provider" will not have the right to sublicense its rights under its trademark license to anyone including any of its partners or subcontractors who may not otherwise be individually licensed by NCI. See the response to Question 46 for additional information about licenses as they apply to teams.

48. The RFA states that as a prerequisite for designation as a licensed Support Service Provider, NCI will negotiate with the applicant a trademark license that is acceptable to NCI? Will you provide more details on this process, what it entails, and what the criteria for acceptability are?

Applicants that NCI CBIIT has initially determined to be qualified providers may enter into negotiations to become licensees to use the caBIG® trademark. The license will be negotiated to be appropriate for, and limited to, the service category(s) for which the applicant has been determined to be a qualified provider.

49. Will NCI consider awarding a license to an organization if some of the required expertise will be provided by another organization in a traditional prime contractor – subcontractor relationship?

See answer to question #47.

50. What is the preferred format for the application?

Applications may be submitted in either Microsoft Word or PDF format.

51. Does the application need to list specific staff?

Applications that list specific staff are not required, though applicants should be able to describe applicable staff education and experience as described in the evaluation criteria. See also the response to question #27.

52. I assume that no budgetary materials are necessary.

Budgetary materials are not required.

53. *As part of our application to provide services in category 2, we are asked to list the applications we intend to support. Will our proposal be accepted or rejected on a per application basis, or will our proposal be accepted or rejected holistically?*

Each service area application will be accepted or rejected in its entirety, not on a per tool basis. See also the answer to Question 19 above.

54. *After the customization/enhancement of the original caBIG tools, is it possible for an SSP to market the whole product as their own or would there be any restrictions?*

This circumstance is explicitly covered by the SSP license. SSPs are allowed to freely market their modified version of the software but their redistribution of the caBIG® software code must retain the caBIG® copyright notice (included in license) and the list of conditions and the disclaimer and limitation of liability described in the license.

New Questions and Answers – November 2010

55. *What are the open source technologies that are used in all the below: i. caCore (EVS, caDSR, caCore SDK, CSM, caAdaptor); ii. MDA and UML; iii. caGrid- and Web Services Resource Framework (WSRF)-compliant grid services; iv. caGrid Introduce Toolkit; and v. caBIG(r) Compatibility Guidelines.*

Information about the technologies associated with these tools are available either on the caBIG® website and wikis or in the technical documentation for the tools. Useful reference pages may include:

- For caCORE: <https://wiki.nci.nih.gov/display/caCORE/CORE+Product+Dependency+Matrix>
- Additional References for caCORE: <https://wiki.nci.nih.gov/display/caCORE/CORE+Wiki+Home+Page#COREWikiHomePage-caCOREandInfrastructureOverview>
- caAdapter: <https://wiki.nci.nih.gov/display/caCORE/caAdapter>
- caGrid: https://cabig-kc.nci.nih.gov/CaGrid/KC/index.php/CaGrid_1.3
- MDA, UML, and the Compatibility Guidelines are frameworks and models, and are not necessarily associated with any specific technology on their own.

56. *As an SSP will we be required to actively market and promote caBIG tools and platform?*

There are no promotion or marketing requirements associated with being an SSP. However, upon successful negotiation of a license, we ask SSPs to establish a webpage that describes the specific services that they provide within the limits of the license, to help customers find the information they need about the SSP with respect to caBIG®. This SSP-hosted page will be linked to from the caBIG® community website at https://cabig.nci.nih.gov/esn/service_providers.

57. *What is the duration of the training phase for an SSP, who will provide training and where will it be conducted, who will be responsible for the logistics?*

We assume that applicants for the designation of SSP are already qualified to deliver services in the service area being applied for, and assessing your preexisting capabilities is part of the evaluation process. As such, there is no formal training program specifically for SSPs, as we expect that SSPs are already ready to go in serving customers once the license is negotiated. Like all community members, potential SSPs are encouraged to take advantage of caBIG® extensive web-based knowledge base and training available through the caBIG® Training Portal at <https://cabig.nci.nih.gov/training>.

58. *With which entity a contractual deal will be placed for any work commissioned under the SSP program.*

The SSP program is not associated with any specific contract, and designation as an SSP does not guarantee any kind of contract. Any contracts with SSPs are between the SSP and the customer engaging the SSP; there is no contractual relationship with the NCI and the SSP. The invitation to enter license negotiations with the NCI relates not to any contractual arrangement between the SSP and the NCI, but relates to an invitation to enter into negotiations with NCI for an approved SSP to become licensed to use the NCI Trademarks in its advertising of certain services. The granting of the designation of "SSP" is only an indication from NCI that specific criteria for performance have been met, whereas, the license to use the Trademarks grants permission to use the caBIG® trademarks and outlines the terms and conditions related to that use. SSP services are rendered by SSPs to clients under contractual business arrangements organized by and between those parties (the SSP and the client), and are independent of the NCI and the caBIG® program.

59. *Will the SSP be referred new opportunities emerging globally?*

See response to Questions 1 and 6 above.

60. *When awarding work to an SSP what factors are kept in consideration?*

Applications for the SSP program are evaluated using the criteria presented in the SSP application. Criteria used by clients to select service providers for their needs are defined by those clients. As noted in Question 58, the SSP license itself is not associated with any specific contract or award for project work.

61. *Who will be responsible for maintenance and support of the integration layer developed for any client?*

While caBIG® offers a number of support options, summarized at <https://cabig.nci.nih.gov/esn/support.htm>, roles and responsibilities for maintenance and support for any specific client is to be determined in the agreement between the SSP and the client. The caBIG® program is not responsible for maintaining or supporting any code outside its released versions of tools. The caBIG® program does support an open development initiative and encourages code contributions that may be considered for inclusion into the main distribution, as appropriate.

62. *The caBIG tools inventory includes more than 40 tools and all are open source and free to download. If this is the case what would be the role of an SSP if it adopts a tool and implements it in a hospital or in a research institute? Is it to customize the tools according to the requirement of particular hospital and research center?*

Tools installation and/or customization are certainly possible roles for an SSP working with a client that wishes to adopt caBIG® tools. Each SSP must define its own value proposition and approach to learning about any specific client's needs and for positioning its services with potential clients accordingly.

63. *Does a hospital or a research institute have to become a Node under caGrid before using any of the caBIG tools? Or it is only required when adapting a running tool at hospital or research institute to connect with caGRID through Compatibility Framework?*

Tools available from caBIG® can be adopted to meet organizational needs without becoming a node on the grid if doing so meets their specific needs. Establishing a grid node is a necessary part of the process for anyone wishing to connect compatible tools with the grid, but it is not a requirement for using many caBIG® tools on their own.

64. *Does an SSP who opts for only "Adaptation and Enhancement of caBIG®-Compatible Software Applications" needs to also provide "Deployment Support for caBIG® Software Applications" as well? Deployment support also includes the integration and may need software development expertise required to write APIs to connect both legacy and caBIG tools. Also data transformation and migration may take place.*

Though there may be some overlap in services, the SSP service categories are independent of each other; applicants can apply for one or several categories depending on their qualifications and interests.

65. *If any custom integration software is written to make caBIG platform and hospital systems talk then who will own the IP of the software. Will the SSP be required to share this information with other SSPs?*

SSPs are allowed to freely market modified versions of caBIG® software but any redistribution of modified caBIG® software code must retain the caBIG® copyright notice (included in the Model caBIG® Open Source Software license) and the list of conditions and the disclaimer and limitation of liability described in the license. If the SSP develops new software (e.g, custom integration software) that is not derived from caBIG® code, then the SSP owns that IP and is not required to share it with anyone outside client-specific agreements. As an open source community, we do encourage the contribution of community-generated code for those wishing to give back to the growing community of developers. This contribution is optional unless required by the client.